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THE QUAKER.

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The Killing of Almighty Voice.

BY BASIL C. D'EASUM.

AN EPISODE OF THE GREAT NORTHWEST IN WHICH WAS REFLECTED THROUGH THE PRIMAL SAVAGERY OF AN INDIAN'S NATURE A TRAGEDY COMMON TO ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF CIVILIZATION.

NOW, what first started the fuss was a woman. She was a Cree squaw, one of the wives of Almighty Voice.

And he was a brave who, in the buffalo days, the good old days, had many followers and whose word was listened to in the council lodges when the Crees and their old enemies the Blackfeet were warring against each other.

But now a great change had come over the land; the Blackfeet were sullenly crowded into "reservations;" scalping was a forbidden pastime, and the buffaloes had gone, fleeing before the coming of that strange beast, the "tenderfoot" in knickerbockers and golf stockings.

And Almighty Voice tried to learn the new ways of the newcomers, but in his heart he despised them as a nation of squaws, poor hunters, blind on the trail, and full of empty words.

The "company's" men he knew and could understand; for the company's men knew and understood the Indian.

The "old timers" of the Hudson's Bay Company were men saturated with knowledge of Indian ways and customs; in many cases they had taken as wives Indian women and were themselves semi savages, for it is always very much easier for a civilized man to become a savage than for a savage to become civilized.

"ALMIGHTY VOICE WAS A BRAVE WHO, IN THE BUFFALO DAYS, HAD MANY FOLLOWERS."

Almighty Voice knew the old time factors and men of the Hudson's Bay Company; but these new men—boys in

white shirts and who could not tell the difference between the tracks of a mink and coyote—of what use were they but to measure out for him tea, sugar, and

Prairie Chicken

other stores in return for the skins of the musk ox, caribou, bears and foxes which he brought to the fort?

Wrapped in his blanket and attended by his two squaws, Prairie Chicken and Big Moccasin, who were carrying bundles of furs, Almighty Voice stalked into the log storeroom at the Hudson's Bay Company's post one morning.

Then he stood at one side, as though the matter did not concern him at all, while the clerk turned over the skins and calculated how many "made beaver" (a "made beaver" is a token worth fifty cents) the company would allow for them.

Meanwhile Prairie Chicken and Big Moccasin wandered round the storeroom, gazing at the many strange things therein.

And young Bradley, fresh from Aberdeen, very junior clerk in the service of the H. B. C.—which means shop boy —looked at Prairie Chicken, for she was a graceful figure in her Indian dress with the broad, gayly decorated knife belt round her shapely waist.

Moreover, she had a roving eye, and she looked at young Bradley, and the look was such as only a young and pretty woman can give.

For she was but eighteen years old; and at that age many Indian women possess a peculiar power of fascination, though hardships soon change them into tired beasts of burden.

Perhaps Almighty Voice, chief though he was, was not the husband of her desire; perhaps she was weary of her companion slave, Big Moccasin.

Prairie Chicken was a woman; and a woman's mind is a mysterious thing, a tangled skein of whims, wisdom and contradictions.

But she looked at young Bradley, and Bradley looked at her; and Big Moccasin (who was the first wife) caught the glance on the way and made a mental note of it.

Then Almighty Voice, his business finished, silently strode out of the store, leaving his wives to follow him to the "tepee" which was set up on the bank of a creek about half a mile away.

There is not the slightest doubt about the fact that Percy Bradley was seven or eight different kinds of born fool, and since birth he had been accumulating asininity.

It was to give him a chance of unburdening himself of this load that his thoughtful friends had shipped him out to Canada, to this "really excellent opening" in the service of the H. B. C. at Fort Gillette, in the Far Northwest.

There time hung heavily on his hands, there were no amusements; his chief officer in the store was an old Scotchman, an old timer of the old timers who had but little sympathy with the young recruit.

And, worst of all, there were no white women there; and only a man who has felt it knows what it means to exist in a land where they are not.

THERE WAS A HUNGRY LOOK IN HIS EYE AS HE SLOWLY RAISED HIS RIFLE.

Traders and missionaries may do their part, but it is the brave, true gentlewoman, who follows her loved ones into the new country, who is doing the great work of real civilization.

So Percy Bradley strolled down to the "tepee" and saw Prairie Chicken again, not once, but several times.

No doubt he was anxious to study the Cree language, which would be useful to him in his work at the store. He might have had his pick of teachers from among the frowsy beggars who were loafing round the Fort, but his choice was Prairie Chicken.

There is a language of the eye which is more easily learned than that of the tongue; perhaps young Bradley was studying the language of the eye.

But Big Moccasin saw him, and (like another dear old lady, Mrs. Grundy) she "thought it her duty" to tell the lord and master, Almighty Voice.

And, one evening, young Bradley came again to the chief's tepee.

The chief and Big Moccasin were not there, but Prairie Chicken sat on the musk ox robe, embroidering a very dainty pair of moccasins with porcupine quills for the "white man."

To the two within it seemed but a few moments before the flap of the "tepee" was raised by the bangled wrist of Big Moccasin, and in the opening she stood with Almighty Voice.

His face was painted after the fashion of the days when he went forth to ravage the Blackfeet, and there was a hungry look in his eyes as he slowly raised his rifle.

And Big Moccasin stood beside him, holding up the flap of the "tepee" and smiling into the eyes of Prairie Chicken.

Young Bradley sprang to his feet and stood in front of Prairie Chicken. At that moment when he looked down the barrel of the Indian's rifle he was more of a man than he had been at any time during his life.

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Not a word was spoken; Almighty Voice pulled the trigger and the same bullet killed the white man and the Indian squaw.

They lay side by side on the ground, and a thin line of blue smoke curled up into the air through the opening in the top of the "tepee."

And this was the way in which Almighty Voice became what is known as a "Bad Indian."

Then, hastily packing his belongings on his ponies, he fled with Big Moccasin, and henceforth he was an Ishmaelite, his hand against every white man and every white man's hand against him.

Of course the troopers of the Northwest Mounted Police went out after him, but Almighty Voice had many friends among his Cree brethren, and thus it was easy for him to keep out of the way of "simoganes," "the red coats."

Now, in crime, as in every other profession, a man either advances or recedes.

There is no such thing as perpetual inertia.

So Almighty Voice, having killed a man, turned his attention to even greater crimes; he stole cattle—the unforgivable sin in the Northwest.

Now, you will please to understand that there is no pardon for such as do this thing; property, in the Northwest, is more to be respected than human life.

If one man shoot another the jury will probably acquit the shooter on the ground of "self defense." But no man ever yet stole a horse or used a branding iron on another man's calf and then made a successful plea of "self defense."

So long as Almighty Voice confined his operations to shooting down H. B. C. clerks the settlers were well content to let the Northwest Mounted Police hunt for him.

But when it was known that he was helping himself to cattle and horses—that was a very different story, and the ranchers saddled their ponies, filled their cartridge belts, and went out to look for him.

Indians, as a general rule, are very bad shots with a rifle; but Almighty Voice happened to be an exception to this rule, and two of the ranchers who rode out that morning with jingling spurs came home that evening in a wagon, lying on their backs, with blankets thrown over their faces, dead.

Moreover, some members of the party had gone close enough to the Indian to hear him shout his defiance that he would never be captured alive.

Then the troopers and the settlers hunted him, but he was not to be found; and for some time nothing was heard of him.

Perhaps he went North to the Barren Grounds to hunt the musk ox and the caribou; perhaps he was among the Dog Rib Indians; perhaps he wandered to the South, to Montana, where there are many "non treaty" Crees, renegades and vagabonds; perhaps (and this was most likely) he was within a few miles, a few rods even of the searchers after him.

There was a price set upon his head; but no one claimed the blood money, and for nearly two years Almighty Voice kept quiet, though rumors would reach the Fort that he had been seen at such and such a place where, perhaps, the hide of a four year old steer would be found, or perhaps some rancher would exchange shots with the wandering outlaw. The Northwest is a very roomy country.

It was Jubilee Year, 1897, a year of rejoicing in all of the dominions of the Queen; and the officers and men of "X" Division of the N. W. M. P. were celebrating the event by a dance at Fort Gillette one night in May.

The messroom was decorated with flags, carbines, swords, and revolvers; the red coats of the men, the bright dresses of the half breed girls (who have the Indian's barbaric love of color); the merry antics of the dancers as they

threaded the mysteries of " Right and Left Six " or frolicked in the " Rabbit Dance " or " Red River Jig," made up a bright and pleasing picture of the people of the Northwest at play—the Northwest, where existence is made up of " chores," work, and hardships many.

The dancing was going on merrily when a sergeant came into the ballroom and held a whispered conversation with the major.

Then it was noticed that the major spoke to several men, who at once left the room; and soon it was known that Almighty Voice was in the Cottonwood Hills, only fifteen miles away.

A rancher had brought the news that the old renegade, with two of his relations, had been tracked by a couple of troopers to a camp on Kinni Kinek Creek, that one of the policemen had been killed and the other badly wounded.

THE BESIEGERS SAW A TALL LEAN INDIAN SPRING UP AND SHAKE A RIFLE TAUNTINGLY ABOVE HIS HEAD.

The rancher also said that the Indians were in a valley, and the outlets were guarded so that they were practically caught in a trap; but since it was well known that Almighty Voice had sworn that he would never be taken alive it would be a dangerous task to lay hands on the old wolf.

Then, without waiting to change their full dress uniforms, a party of the

N. W. M. P. rode out to the Cottonwood Hills, taking with them an old brass cannon which could throw a shell about a mile.

"Where are they?" asked Sergeant Smith, as he rode up to a rancher who was sitting on his pony with his rifle laid across the saddle in front of him.

"Down in the valley, close to that little clump of willows, about thirty yards north of that burnt cottonwood tree. I think they must be lying down in a kind of a hole or pit. Jackson and I rode round to the other side to see if we could get a sight of them, but we could not. Jackson had a close call, for a bullet smashed the horn of his saddle."

"Well, we've got to rout them out of that bush," said the sergeant. "Of course we could charge them, but it would mean the death of some of our fellows, and the orders are not to throw away any more lives. Bring that gun up and rake that clump of willows."

The willows were about five hundred yards away, and the gun was sighted for that distance, but the shell burst harmlessly. Again Corporal Angus fired and the shell flew wide of the mark.

Then the besiegers saw a tall, lean figure spring up from behind a pit and shake a rifle tauntingly above his head; and in the clear air they could hear his voice mockingly crying:

"O, white man, can you not shoot better than that? You must if you do not want me to laugh at you."

"Oh, is that so?" growled the sergeant, biting his mustache. "Suppose you take this for an answer."

And he aimed the old brass cannon and dropped a shot into the willows.

Then a few of the police cautiously advanced into the valley, creeping inch by inch nearer to the pit, from which now came a curious, chanting noise.

Now that the gunner had the correct range he was placing the shells very close to the mark, and the curious, chanting noise was made by the three Indians who, realizing that it was a matter of only a few minutes before a shell would burst among them, were singing the Death Song of the Cree warriors.

Presently a shell came screaming along, grazed the burnt cottonwood tree, sending a shower of white splinters far and wide, and then burst just above the pit.

The chanting noise ceased; and the storming party made a rush forward and gained the pit.

There, in a hole some six feet deep which they had dug with their hunting knives and scooped out with their hands, lay the dead bodies of Almighty Voice and his two friends; the shell which hit the cottonwood tree had done its work well.

The body of Almighty Voice had several old bullet wounds, and his head was completely shattered by a piece of shell.

In the bosom of his shirt were found some trinkets which young Bradley had been wearing that fatal evening when he called upon Prairie Chicken.

There was young Bradley's pocketbook, and in it was the photograph of a sweet faced Scotch lassie who had fondly believed that her Percy would some day astonish the world by his genius.

But I have already remarked that young Bradley was a fool.

BETROTHED.

THERE'S a new, glad light in the arching heavens;
There's a new song sung by the old, old sea;
The world is fresh bathed in joy and beauty—
I love my lover, and he loves me!

Oh, gladness! Gladness beyond comparing!
Oh, rapture! Joy that none else have known!
For I know that, of all the world of lovers,
We two love truly, and we alone!

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